

**TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT
SELECT BOARD REGULAR MEETING
Minutes of October 8, 2019**

- I. ROLL CALL.** Select Board Chair K. David Maxwell, Board members Lynn Doney, Julie H. Goodrich, Kenneth W. Goslant, and Nathaniel Miller. Also present were Town Manager Jeff Schulz, Acting Clerk Kenneth McCann, Deborah Zuaro (Northfield Conservation Commission), Russ Barrett (Northfield Conservation Commission), Jane Pekol (Northfield Energy Committee), Gail Hall (Northfield Energy Committee), Ted Fisher, Lydia Petty, Joseph Zuaro, Sally Davidson, Bethany Drum, David Hanna, Jeffrey Ott, Mark Fournier, and Elroy Hill.

Chair Maxwell called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

- II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE.** The Board members and the public were asked to rise and recite the Pledge of Allegiance.

- III. SET/ADJUST AGENDA.** There were no changes to the posted agenda.

IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (SCHEDULED)

- a. Russ Barrett and Deborah Zuaro, Northfield Conservation Commission (NCC): Town Forest Stewardship Plan.** Mr. Barrett said the NCC has been working on a stewardship plan for the Northfield Town Forest over the past four (4) years. The plan includes an inventory of natural resources; recommendations for protection of these resources; and an endorsement to create a NCC subcommittee (Town Forest Stewardship Committee) that would include NCC members as well as Town Forest users (i.e. hikers, bikers, etc.). Mr. Barrett would like the Select Board members to formally adopt the Town Forest Stewardship plan this evening. He did emphasize that this would be a "living document" that could be quickly amended should circumstances warrant. He noted the NCC held a public forum regarding the proposed plan last week and received some valuable feedback.

Chair Maxwell has read the proposed stewardship plan thoroughly and has a number of concerns. For example, he has doubts about creating an additional municipal committee in order to oversee the Town Forest. Mr. Barrett said NCC members thought it would be good to include some actual users of the Town Forest into the deliberative process. The Select Board members would remain the final decision-makers on Town Forest matters. In addition, the NCC members did not want their monthly regular meetings continually tied up with relatively minor Town Forest issues. Chair Maxwell felt this might just add an additional layer of bureaucracy should someone seek permission to camp in the Town Forest, etc. Mr. Barrett thought the new subcommittee would be the proper venue should residents have complaints, make suggestions to make, etc. The NCC members will review this matter further.

Chair Maxwell asked for confirmation that the proposed plan would allow logging in the Town Forest. Mr. Barrett said it would. The plan would designate some areas where logging should be discouraged but not prohibited. Chair Maxwell noted the Forest Management Plan prepared by Consulting Forester Rose E. Beatty (and included as an appendix to the proposed plan) was submitted in April 2000. He asked if the document was still relevant and if there had been any thought of updating it. Mr. Barrett feels the document is still useful. An updated Forest Management Plan could be drafted with Select Board authorization.

Chair Maxwell said current local ordinances already ban All-Terrain Vehicle (ATV) use in the municipal forest. However, he has heard some complaints that mountain bike usage has been overly restricted on the existing trail system. Mr. Barrett said in order to avoid conflict (i.e. collisions) between hikers and bikers, a rule was put forward that mountain bikers should go up the trails located on municipal property and down the trails located on Norwich University (NU) property. Chair Maxwell doesn't want to discourage non-motorized use of the trail system. Board member Goslant also feels an additional committee is not needed. Ms. Zuaro said this would be a NCC subcommittee and perhaps the best place for such issues as mountain bike use on the trail system to be discussed in depth, thus resolving possible disputes.

Lydia Petty suggested the NCC members could work with Manager Schulz and the Select Board members to establish forest use policies so any simple requests could be decided by rule and not on a case-by-case basis. Ms. Zuaro felt some uses might require written permission while others would not. Board member Goslant is concerned that an outright ban on trapping in the Town Forest would preclude dealing with problem beavers, etc. Ms. Zuaro said if such a situation arose, an exception could be made. The NCC members didn't want unlimited trapping in the Town Forest. Board member Miller concurred as unrestricted trapping is usually bad for hikers and/or their dogs who might wander off established trails. Board member Goslant suggested amending the wording to clarify that trapping is not allowed without Select Board permission.

Regarding the restrictions on downhill mountain bike travel, Board member Goodrich has heard there really is no conflict between hikers and bikers on the trail system. Mr. Barrett said there had been in the beginning before these rules were put in place. Ms. Zuaro felt it might be time to loosen the restrictions. Board member Goodrich asked why tapping maple trees in the Town Forest was discouraged. Mr. Barrett said the installation of tubing might interfere with walking and biking paths. He said this has caused serious disputes in other towns that has resulted in vandalism of sugaring equipment, trail signs, etc.

Board member Goodrich has concerns about making the Town Forest subject to a conservation easement that might restrict future use of these public lands. Board member Miller said any conservation easement would have to be approved by the Select Board members. Board member Goodrich then asked about public parking available for trail system access. Mr. Barrett said the only available parking now is by the Shaw Outdoor Center. There also is weekend parking available at the nearby medical center. He felt it might be a good idea to allow limited parking at some of the trail beginnings. Board member Miller said the NCC has looked at some private properties near the trail systems that might be purchased and subsequently used for public parking. He added that one advantage of having a conservation easement in place is that it would create access to grant funds that could be used to create parking spaces, etc. In addition, the easement would ensure the Town Forest is protected for the foreseeable future from commercial development.

Mr. Barrett confirmed whenever he has started a grant application process to obtain funding for a Town Forest project, the first question asked usually is whether there is a conservation easement in place. Board member Goslant noted this matter was discussed fully when the purchase of the TDS property on Paine Mountain was first proposed. At that time, the Select Board members rejected establishing a conservation easement for the Town Forest as it was felt it would be too restrictive on possible future use. Board member Miller confirmed some conservation easements do contain obstructive language but that doesn't mean one approved by the Northfield Select Board would. Ms. Zuaro said some of the agencies that provide funds for forest preservation projects don't want to allow for the possibility that these monies will be used to accommodate future commercial development on Town Forest property.

Given the concerns expressed tonight, Chair Maxwell asked if it were possible for the Town Forest Stewardship Plan to be revised and returned to the Select Board members for further discussion and possible approval at the next regular meeting (10/22/19). Mr. Barrett said this could be done. The revisions would involve the new subcommittee; language allowing nuisance trapping; a clear statement that the Select Board has the final decision regarding Town Forest matters; clarification regarding mountain bike use on the trail system, etc. Ms. Zuaro said once it has been approved, the Town Forest Stewardship Plan should serve the community well for at least ten (10) years. Of course, revisions can be made should the need arise. Board member Goodrich also would like it clarified that any language concerning the establishment of a conservation easement is advisory only and not a directive. Board member Goslant said he would not oppose approving a conservation easement that met the threshold for grant applications without being too restrictive regarding future Town Forest use. Chair Maxwell looks forward to seeing the updated plan draft that will incorporate tonight's suggestions. He then expressed his appreciation to Mr. Barrett, Ms. Zuaro, and the other NCC members for their considerable work on this document.

- b. Jane Pekol and Gail Hall: Northfield Energy Committee (NEC) Update.** Ms. Pekol said she and Ms. Hall have two (2) initiatives to discuss tonight along with a possible committee appointment. At a previous meeting (08/27/19), Ms. Pekol said NEC members were looking into "Hitching Post" programs in Montpelier and Worcester that reward drivers who pick up commuters at designated locations with vouchers for free coffee, etc. They have spoken to Phoenix Mitchell, the Hitching Post founder, and Scott Kerner of Carrier Roasting/Good Measure Brewing about the possibility of expanding this program to Northfield.

Mr. Mitchell has offered valuable advice and Mr. Kerner would be willing to provide and redeem "Coffee Coins" at his business. Ms. Pekol said if the Select Board members are willing to authorize a letter of support, the Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans) will provide \$500 towards starting a Hitching Post location in Northfield. The total startup costs are estimated at about \$750 so NEC will have to determine how to fund the balance. Ms. Petty thought the concept was unfamiliar but could be worth a try. Board member Goodrich thought it sounded a lot like hitchhiking and might entail its old risks. Board member Goslant is concerned that the municipality might have liability issues if it formally supports the program and a passenger is later harmed by an aggressive and/or drunk driver (or vice versa). Ms. Pekol thought some precautions could be put in place to prevent this like CCTV cameras, siting the Hitching Post in a very public place, vetting program participants, etc.

Board member Goslant wondered why commuters can't set up their own car pools without the assistance of an outside agency. Chair Maxwell would like the pick-up/drop off location determined before the Select Board provides its endorsement. Ms. Pekol thought the east side of the Common by the flagpole was a logical choice but will explore others. This matter will be put on the next regular meeting agenda (10/22/19) and Mr. Mitchell will be asked to attend himself to describe the proposal and suggest how potential risks can be minimized.

Gail Hall said during the "Ride the Bus to Work Week" held last May, she and other NEC members were surprised by how little Northfield residents knew about public transportation options in our community, especially the Green Mountain Transit (GMT) Northfield-Montpelier Commuter bus service. This started the notion of creating an informational kiosk located at a main GMT bus stop that will show bus routes, fees charged, etc. Ms. Hall said Norwich University (NU) has courses that focus on siting and creating such information kiosks so there is a possibility of getting some expert advice at little or no cost. It is possible the kiosk could include additional information about the history of Northfield, business services available, recreational opportunities, etc. Ms. Hall said the informational kiosk would located on a main bus route with the Common the most logical location. She has no estimates on what this would cost as this concept remains in the early planning stages. It is likely startup funding would begin with a \$500 mini-grant from Vermont AARP. Other funding sources will be explored and there is the possibility local businesses might provide support in return for advertising space, etc. Ms. Hall will keep the Select Board members informed of any new developments as she and the other NEC members look further into this possibility. Chair Maxwell noted NU hosted an information travel center (with public telephone) at Park Avenue for some time. Ms. Hall said there always was the possibility of adding smaller kiosks in the future near the NU campus and in Northfield Falls that would complement the main one.

Ms. Pekol said Nick Laskovski, one of NEC's founding members, resigned from the committee about a month ago when he relocated from Northfield Falls to Roxbury. She would like to recommend Ted Fisher as his replacement. Mr. Fisher grew up in Vermont and has returned here after ten (10) years living out of state in order to work for the Vermont Agency of Education. He now serves as Director of Communications and Legislative Affairs. If appointed, Mr. Fisher also would replace Mr. Laskovski as the NEC Outreach Coordinator. Motion by Board member Goodrich, seconded by Board member Goslant, to appoint Ted Fished to the vacancy on the Northfield Energy Committee. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- a. September 24, 2019 (Regular Meeting).** Motion by Board member Goodrich, seconded by Board member Goslant, to approve the minutes. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

VI. APPROVAL OF BILLS

- a. Warrant #07-20.** Motion by Board member Goodrich, seconded by Board member Doney, to approve Warrant #07-20 in the amount of \$792,685.32. Board member Doney asked about a \$7,800 payment for a sewer line reimbursement indicated as "Damage to Property of Others." Manager Schulz said the Northfield Electric Department (NED) contracted with Green Mountain Power (GMP) to install a new utility pole. The pole damaged a private sewer line and the property owner paid a private contractor to excavate the site and install a new sewer line. This payment will cover what the contractor charged the property owner. Chair Maxwell felt there should be an established policy that would govern whether NED or GMP should be held financially responsible in such circumstances. This matter will be discussed at the next joint meeting of the utility commissions. Board member Doney asked about an \$885 bill to sweep the Common before the Labor Day holiday weekend. Manager Schulz said this invoice also covered work done on South Main Street and other locations.

The Select Board members then noted payments for two (2) new municipal vehicles. A 2019 Ford Interceptor was purchased for the Northfield Police Department (NPD) for about \$35,000. This price includes the credit for the trade-in of the NPD 2012 Ford Explorer. In addition, the Highway Department's 2014 Western Star dump truck body was installed on a new chassis for about \$98,000. Both these purchases were covered in the respective department's Capital Equipment Plan (CEP) budget. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

- b. **Approval of Biweekly Payroll through September 22, 2019.** Motion by Board member Goodrich, seconded by Board member Doney, to approve the biweekly payroll in the amount of \$116,558.39. Board member Goodrich thought NPD overtime expenses for this period were rather high. Chair Maxwell is grateful Finance Director Laurie Baroffio now is manually inserting the year-to-date balance for this particular account on these biweekly reports. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

VII. SELECT BOARD

- a. **Transfer Station Agreement.** Manager Schulz said the municipality's initial one-year contract with All Clean Waste Services (Eric Davis) to operate the Northfield Transfer Station/Recycling Center is expiring. As the agreement has worked out well for both parties, Manager Schulz is requesting authorization from the Select Board members to sign a new agreement. The terms and conditions will remain the same except this agreement will be for two (2) years. Motion by Board member Miller, seconded by Board member Doney, to authorize Manager Schulz to sign a new agreement with All Clean Waste Services. Board member Goslant said he hasn't heard any complaints about Mr. Davis and his operation of the Transfer Station, which is a very good sign. Board member Goodrich saw attached to the agreement a current list of materials accepted at the facility and disposal charges. She asked if Mr. Davis had the ability to alter this unilaterally. Manager Schulz said any changes would have to be a mutual decision. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- b. **Camp Wihakowi Dam Removal Project.** Manager Schulz said the Friends of the Winooski (FOW) recently (09/10/19) discussed with the Select Board members their proposal to remove the abandoned and dilapidated dam located at Camp Wihakowi on Bull Run. Before FOW can submit the Act 250 permit request to do this project, they must be able to state where the estimated 26,000 yards of sediment to be taken from the stream bed will be dispersed. The municipality can take none, some, or all of this material. Manager Schulz has spoken to Highway Foreman Trent Tucker about whether any of this material can be repurposed as road material. Neither of them can positively state how much of the removed sediment can be used thus so Manager Schulz recommends that FOW designate two (2) or more possible disposal sites as the municipality will accept only usable road material. There also a concern about the number of truck loads it will take to remove this material as well as the Japanese knotweed that has to be taken away from the site and buried deep elsewhere. Manager Schulz noted as part of the Act 250 process, the bridge would be inspected to determine whether the posted weight limit is accurate and sufficient for this project.

Board member Goslant suggested looking at longer trucks that could remove more material at a time while spreading out the weight load on the bridge. He added there is an area near the public schools that could use some fill to create a level surface for a playing field, etc. Perhaps this sediment could be used to this purpose. Manager Schulz said school officials would have to be brought into the discussion of such a possibility. One concern about this would be the number of truckloads that would have to travel through a residential neighborhood. Manager Schulz said FOW would like to complete the initial phase of the permitting process as soon as possible so the actual dam removal could be done next summer. They will need to know exactly where the sediment can be taken and how much, if any, the municipality will take. Chair Maxwell would like the Highway Subcommittee to meet soon, discuss this matter, and provide recommendations to the full Select Board.

VIII. BOARD MEMBERS' COMMENTS, CONCERNS, QUESTIONS

- a. **Roadside Leaf Collection.** Chair Maxwell stated the leaf picker will start operating on the roads next Monday (10/14/19). Leaf collection will continue through Friday, November 22, 2019 or the first snowstorm (whichever comes first). Residents are asked to move their leaves to the side of the road and they will be removed as soon as possible. This collection is for leaves only, not brush or branches.

- b. **Wheels for Warmth Program.** Chair Maxwell said the annual drop off of old tires (\$4.00 disposal fee) will start on Saturday, October 12, 2019 at various locations in the Central Vermont area and this will continue through Friday, October 25, 2019. Tires certified as safe then will be sold at reduced prices at the DuBois Construction site in Middlesex on Saturday, October 26, 2019 from 7:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. All proceeds from disposal fees, tire sales, etc. will go directly to emergency heating programs.
- c. **East Street Sidewalks.** Board member Goslant said despite project hitches due to the original paver pulling out, the sidewalks are now complete and look great. We are still waiting for the new light standards to be installed.

IX. TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

- a. **Water Street/Union Street Stormwater Project.** Manager Schulz has received strong assurances that Pike Industries will start repairing the roads in the project area next Monday (10/14/19). Board member Goslant asked if this would include subbase work. Manager Schulz said it would where appropriate. Mark Fournier drives through this area on a regular basis and has been very disappointed with how long it has taken to get to this stage.
- b. **Union Brook Road.** There has been some discussion of providing interim fixes on a couple bad spots on Union Brook Road before the complete road reconstruction starts early next spring. The options include grinding the pavement down to the base and graveling it until the paving project starts. Another option would be to provide an overlay coat that would cost about \$30,000. The new paving material would be ground down and repurposed during the major project next year. Chair Maxwell would like the Highway Subcommittee to meet later this week so a recommendation can be provided to the full Select Board as soon as possible. If necessary, a special meeting could be held early next week while the pavers are still in town. Jeffrey Ott suggested grinding down the worst sections of pavement only down a few inches so the surface can be smoothed out.
- c. **FY 2018/2019 Financial Audit.** Manager Schulz said the contracted auditors would be at the next Select Board meeting to provide a full overview of the process. He has been informed there were no major issues encountered during the audit.
- d. **IBEW Union Contract.** Manager Schulz said the union contract covering the bulk of municipal employees has been finalized (as authorized by the Select Board at the last meeting). There is still work to be done on the contract with the NPD union.
- e. **South Main Street Sidewalk Project RFP.** Manager Schulz is working on the RFP for this project that will be done next summer. The municipality received a \$75,000 VTrans grant for this project, which should cover about half of the total cost.
- f. **Ambulance Billing Services RFP.** Manager Schulz is working on an RFP for ambulance billing services since the current contract with Lyndon Rescue, Inc. will be expiring soon. A number of concerns with this contract will be addressed in the RFP.

X. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (UNSCHEDULED). There was none.

XI. EXECUTIVE SESSION. Motion by Board member Goodrich, seconded by Board member Miller, to go into executive session, in accordance with 1 VSA 313 (a)(1), in order to discuss a contract and a personnel matter with Manager Schulz present. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

The Board went into executive session at 9:35 p.m.

Motion by Board member Goodrich, seconded by Board member Miller, to come out of executive session. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

The Board came out of executive session at 9:55 p.m. No action was taken

XII. ADJOURNMENT. Motion by Board member Goodrich, seconded by Board member Miller, to adjourn. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

The Board adjourned at 9:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kenneth L. McCann

Kenneth L. McCann, Acting Clerk

An audio recording of this meeting is available in the Town Manager's Office.

These minutes were approved at the regular Select Board meeting of October 22, 2019.